



Kansas: What's Wrong, What Should Be Right

"What's the Matter with Kansas?" is a question that has probably been asked too many times, on too many issues, over the years.

On occasion, however, this deeply rooted question is exactly the right one to ask. Such was the case when the Republicans in the Kansas House of Representatives rejected my health care reform plan, which would have enhanced our efficiency and increased our clout in purchasing costly medicines.

As we face a true crisis in health care costs and access, the House Republicans voted down real reforms that would have been in place by July 1. And only at the very last minute did they offer a slapdash set of alternatives to my plan, which has been discussed since 2003.

Perhaps the right question is: "What's the matter with the Republicans who dominate the Kansas Legislature?"

When partisan politics trumps good policy, something's the matter...

When 100 health organizations support health care reforms, and they are ignored, something's the matter...

When streamlining government and relying on market principles are rejected by Republicans, something's the matter...

And when 17 months of work on a major reform are tossed aside and replaced with a one-day-old "concept," something's the matter...

No single proposal can cure all health care problems, but this reform was a great start – a *first step* toward a highly consumer-oriented health care system that operates in a *business-like fashion* and establishes the *most effective, most accountable* Medicaid program possible.

It was also a first step that did not cost Kansans one cent and promised long-term savings through a streamlined system.

In truth, there's nothing wrong with Kansas that cannot be solved by some reasonable dialogue and a real commitment to legislate on behalf of all our citizens. I urge the Republican majorities in the Kansas House and Senate to turn their own health care concepts into an actual plan that will increase efficiency, reduce costs, and insure coverage to all Kansans who need it. The time to act is now.